

Dozens of people killed by a gunman.

School shootings are not just far away events. A similar tragedy happened at a Winnetka school. One of my staff members survived that attack.

Schools should be the safest places in America. That is why I worked last year to enact the School Acquiring Resource Excellence (SAFE) Act, allowing schools to check national criminal records before hiring a teacher, coach or janitor. The check costs only \$12 and can prevent a tragedy like the one that claimed the life of Jessica Lundsford.

It's also about guns.

Last month, I joined Mayor Daley and Mayor Bloomberg of New York to support their "Mayors Against Guns" initiative. Our primary goal is to close the gun show loophole that allows gun show dealers to skip the criminal background checks that every normal firearm store must complete before selling a weapon.

This Congress should also pass the Student and Teacher Safety Act. I coauthored this legislation with Rep. Davis of Kentucky. Endorsed by the National Education Association, the Teacher Safety Act would permit any full-time teacher to search a book bag or locker if, in their professional judgment, they fear a gun has come into the classroom.

This legislation passed the House last year but stalled in the Senate. After what happened in Winnetka, in Columbine and now Blacksburg, the Congress should pass this bill giving our teachers wide powers to protect themselves and their students.